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THE YEARS OF MANY GENERATIONS CONSIDERED :

TWO

SERMONS,

PREACHED IN

BOYLSTON, MASSACHUSETTS,

OCTOBER 17 AND 24, 1852,

GIVING

A HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND MINISTRY

IN SAID TOWN,

AND ALSO EMBRACING MANY FACTS

RELATING TO THE FIRST SETTLERS OF THE PLACE.

BY

WILLIAM H. SANFORD,

PASTOR OF SAID CHURCH;

IT BEING THE

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS SETTLEMENT.

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NOTE.— In giving these discourses to the public, the Author would acknowledge his indebtedness, in collecting the facts which are contained in them, to "WARD's History of Shrewsbury,"—"WILLARD's History of Lancaster,"—"DAVENPORT's History of Boylston,"—Rev. Mr. HARRINGTON's "Century Sermon"—and the "Memorial of the Morse Family," by Prof. ABNER MORSE.

S E R M O N I .

DEUTERONOMY XXX. 7.

REMEMBER THE DAYS OF OLD, CONSIDER THE YEARS OF MANY GENERATIONS ; ASK THY FATHER, AND HE WILL SHEW THEE ; THY ELDERS, AND THEY WILL TELL THEE.

THERE is a peculiar and deep interest in searching ancient records,—in studying the customs, the principles, the enjoyments, the sufferings, and the trials of those who have lived before us. And our interest is greatly increased when our investigations relate to those who are our immediate ancestors,—those who once filled the same places which we now fill, who travelled over the same territory, who cultivated the same lands, and gained their sustenance from the same soil. As there is a perpetual change in the scenery which meets our eye as we change from place to place, or in the habits, and practices, and notions of different communities as we mingle with different societies, so there is an unceasing variety in the condition and customs of successive generations. Our fathers, in many respects, differed from us ; their fathers from them, and each preceding generation had its peculiarities. We enjoy all the advantages connected with the steam engine and the magnetic telegraph hardly thinking that these advantages have been denied to all preceding

generations. If we go back half a century, the most expeditious mode of travelling in this country was by stage, and the most expeditious mode of transmitting intelligence was by mail, and even these facilities for communication were very imperfect compared with their subsequent improvement. If we go back fifty years more, to the middle of the eighteenth century, we lose sight even of these defective modes of travelling and communication, and find every man depending upon private conveyance both for journeying and epistolary correspondence. Instead of the highly cultivated fields,—the rich, beautiful, and convenient dwellings,—the numerous villages and cities,—the extended territory, stretching from the mouth of the Rio Grande, less than twenty-six degrees North latitude, to the British possessions in North America, or forty-nine degrees North latitude, and East and West from the Atlantic to the Pacific, interspersed with abodes of civilization and refinement, traversed in every direction by railroads and telegraphic wires, and competing with the most powerful and exalted nations of the old world in every thing that makes a people great and good and happy; instead of all this there was the extended and unbroken forest, with here and there a rude dwelling, in which you might find the rustic cultivator of a small patch of half-subdued land before his door, the subject of a foreign power, whose oppressive enactments he had even at this early day begun to feel, but was too weak to resist.

Fifty years earlier in our nation's history, and this town was probably without an inhabitant. I can find no record of any settlement within the present limits of Boylston which dates back earlier than 1705, one hundred and forty-seven years ago. Only four towns

within the present limits of the County of Worcester were then incorporated, and neither of these embracing the same territory that it does now. These four towns were Lancaster, incorporated 1653—Mendon, 1667—Brookfield, 1673—and Worcester, 1684. Even the County of Worcester was not incorporated till twenty-five years after this date. Of these four towns, the history of Boylston is intimately connected with that of Lancaster. The first permanent settlement that was made in Lancaster was about the year 1647, two hundred and five years since. A tract of land ten miles long and eight broad was granted to certain persons, one of whom was John Prescott, who was probably the first permanent white settler in the town of Lancaster. Others soon followed, among whom was Thomas Sawyer; from whom descended the numerous family by that name in Lancaster, Sterling, Bolton and vicinity; and his descendants were also among the first, if not the very first, to settle upon the territory embraced in this town. Thomas Sawyer, probably a son of him who first settled in Lancaster, was in the north part of this town, at the place afterwards called Sawyer's Mills, as early as 1705,—this part of the town at that time being a part of Lancaster. This was about twelve years before the south part of the town, embraced subsequently in the town of Shrewsbury, was laid out in lots to the first settlers of that part of the town. Thomas Sawyer was soon followed by others whose descendants are at the present time among the inhabitants of the town. Many of these early inhabitants of our town, especially the north part of it, were probably from Lancaster. The names of Sawyer, Ball, Moore, Stone, Newton, Houghton, Keyes, Bennett and Bigelow, are among the first settlers of both

towns, and are probably, in some cases the same persons, and in others the descendants of the first inhabitants of Lancaster settled in that part of that town which is now the north part of Boylston. There can be but little doubt that this was the manner in which that part of the town which was formerly Lancaster was originally settled.

A few years later, a petition from persons residing in Marlborough was presented to the General Court, praying for a grant of territory lying between Marlborough and Worcester, and Lancaster and Sutton and Hassanamisco (Grafton). This petition was received with favor, and in the year 1717 a committee was appointed by the General Court to lay out this territory in lots to actual settlers upon specified conditions. This committee appear to have discharged their duties in the month of December, 1718. And several of the lots lying within the present limits of this town, were, at that time, received from this committee by persons who settled upon them and were the ancestors of many of the present inhabitants of this place.

As early as 1659 a tract of land consisting of six hundred and fifty acres was granted by the General Court to Richard Davenport, who emigrated from England to this country in 1628 with Gov. Endicot. He landed in Salem in September of that year, and was killed by lightning in Boston in 1665. His descendants, probably his grandsons William and Nathaniel, settled upon this tract of land in 1736. This lot (known for many years by the name of the "Davenport Farm,") was within the limits of the grant made to the proprietors of Shrewsbury, and is now, in part, owned and improved by the descendants of the original owner. The names of the early settlers of the south part of

this town, indeed of all that part which was within the limits of the grant made to the proprietors of the town of Shrewsbury, were, in some cases, the same as of the present inhabitants of the territory. Among them we find the names of Andrews, Bennett, Bigelow, Bush, Flagg, Hastings, Howe, Keyes, Temple, and Taylor.

The Andrews of this town at the present time, who are in middle life, and past it, are probably descendants of the sixth generation of Robert Andrews, who was in Ipswich in 1635. The Bigelows are probably the descendants of Samuel Bigelow, who was in Watertown in 1674, and whose grandson Joseph was settled in Shrewsbury in 1729.

Abiel Bush, the great-grandfather of the late Col. Jotham Bush, was married in Marlborough in 1688. His son, John Bush, settled in that part of Shrewsbury which is now Boylston in 1729, and was the immediate ancestor of the family by that name in this place.

The Flaggs of this town appear to have descended from Thomas Flagg, who was in Watertown in 1643. Probably Gershom Flagg, who was residing within the present limits of this town in 1729, was his great-grandson, and the great-grandfather of the late Dea. Abijah Flagg, Jonathan Flagg, Joseph Flagg, and Calvin Flagg.

The Temples of this town appear to have descended from Richard Temple who was in Charlestown in 1647 and in Concord in 1657, whose great-grandson, Isaac Temple, born in Marlborough in 1703 and settled in the north part of Shrewsbury, now Boylston, in 1729, was the father of Aaron Temple, who was born within the limits of this town in 1739 and the grandfather of Capt. Emory Temple.

Robert Keyes, who was in Watertown in 1633, was the grandfather of Thomas Keyes, who was born in

Sudbury in 1674 and was in this town in 1729. His sons were Jonathan, Cyprian, and probably Henry Keyes, the father of Simeon Keyes, who was the father of Mrs. Patridge, late of this town.

The Brighams of this town probably descended from Thomas Brigham, who came from England and settled in Cambridge about the year 1642. John Brigham, the grandson of Thomas, was the head petitioner for the township of Shrewsbury in 1717 and was settled there in 1718.

The genealogy of the families of others of the early settlers of this town, whose descendants I now see before me, I am unable to trace.

As early then as 1718, in both the northern and southern parts of this town, there were settled permanent residents. It is worthy of remark that both in Lancaster and Shrewsbury special care was taken to provide for the institutions of the gospel and for the education of the young. Winthrop observes in reference to Lancaster, that, as early "as 1644, many from Watertown and other towns joined in the plantation at Nashaway (Lancaster), and, having called a young man, a 'university' scholar—one Mr. Norcross, to be their minister, seven of them, who were no members of any churches, were desirous to gather into a church estate." Such were the strict Puritan notions, even of men who were not connected with the church, that the ministry and the institutions of the gospel must be sustained. And to these Puritan principles must be ascribed, to a great extent, the unparalleled prosperity of this nation, and especially of New England.

In 1647 there was a formal grant made of the town of Lancaster (there being there at that time nine families,) to the inhabitants of the place, upon specified

conditions, one of which was, "that they were ordered to take care that a godly minister be maintained amongst them," also "that no evil persons, enemies to the laws of this Commonwealth, in judgment or in practice, be admitted as inhabitants, and none to have lots confirmed to them but such as take the oath of fidelity." "A provision similar to this was common in the incorporation of other towns, and shows the great importance that was placed upon religion and habits of order; that these were conceived to be at the foundation of all good government, that they reached the highest, mingled with the humblest, and exercised a controlling influence over the whole character of society."*

In the original grant of the town of Shrewsbury there was a similar provision in reference to the support of the gospel. The grant of the township was made with the provision that "they have there at least forty families settled, with an Orthodox minister, within the space of three years, and that a lot and other accommodations, as large and convenient as may be to the place will admit of in the judgment of said committee, be laid out for the first settled minister, also a lot for the ministry, and another for the use of the school."†

The history of this town, subsequent to the settlement of Shrewsbury, both civil and ecclesiastical, is connected with that of Lancaster and Shrewsbury, till 1742, when, by an act of incorporation, it became a distinct precinct. During this period, of about twenty years, but little can be learned of the distinct history of the town. In the general history of the country, during this period, we can learn many things which were familiar to the early residents of this place, and

* Willard's History of Lancaster, p. 23. † History of Shrewsbury, p. 9.

which were regarded by them, at the time, as being intimately connected with their happiness and prosperity. In their ecclesiastical relations they were connected with the Churches of Lancaster and Shrewsbury, the former under the pastoral care of Rev. Mr. Prentice, and the latter under that of Rev. Mr. Cushing.

Every Sabbath the early settlers of this place might be seen, in their homespun, antique dresses, upon the backs of their horses, or on foot, moving in due season to the houses of worship in these two towns. At this early day there was no Church nor religious society organized in this town, no sanctuary erected, no graveyard selected. Even the roads could be nothing more than cart roads or bridle paths through the woods, and the dwellings, rude abodes, made of the rough materials around them, destitute of the beauty and ornament which adorn even the most ordinary of modern houses. Mills for grinding and sawing were early erected by the first inhabitants of this country, but they were necessarily few and far between; ordinary in their construction, and could by no means answer the demand of the growing population, had their habits of living and mode of building been like that of their descendants at the present day. Early in the settlement of Lancaster, John Prescott erected a corn-mill and a saw-mill in the south part of that town. And, for many years, these were the only mills within the limits of the present County of Worcester. "People came from Sudbury to Prescott's grist-mill." It was many years after the last man of that generation had passed off the stage before the first cotton or woolen factory was built on this continent.

The inhabitants of that day also suffered indescribably from the fluctuating state of the currency. There

was no stable circulating medium. The value of money was merely nominal. This evil begun to be felt as early as 1690, when bills of credit were issued in anticipation of taxes for the purpose of meeting certain pressing demands upon the public treasury. This practice of issuing bills of credit, without a specie basis, was continued for years, and was the cause of severe suffering among the early inhabitants of the country. The people of this town, at the period of which we are now speaking, must have felt this evil in common with the inhabitants of the rest of the colonies. The nominal value of paper was not the real value. The real value was perpetually changing, generally depreciating, till it became worthless. This evil continued till 1759, when it was somewhat relieved by the importation of specie from England. It was again experienced by the revolutionary patriots, by the issues of paper money to meet the expenses incident to the revolutionary war.*

During this period also, the town of Shrewsbury was incorporated in 1727. In this transaction, of course, the people of this place were deeply interested. Four years later, the County of Worcester was incorporated. Previous to this date, they belonged to the County of Middlesex. The religious doctrines of this community, during this period, were decidedly Calvinistic. Willard, in his history of Lancaster, remarks that "the prevailing doctrines, from the beginning,

* The following extracts from the Records of Shrewsbury and Boylston will give some idea of the fluctuating state of the currency :—

Oct. 1777, The Church in Shrewsbury Voted £60, to furnish the communion the ensuing year.

Oct. 23, 1780, The North Precinct in Shrewsbury Voted to their minister, Rev. Mr. Fairbanks, as his annual salary, the sum of £6,267=\$20,890.

They also allowed Capt. Ebenezer Ingalsbe £20=\$66 66, for two days' work.

were those of Calvin. And most of the clergy in this vicinity, who embraced the tenets of Arminius, soon found that the age had not arrived that would tolerate a departure from the metaphysical speculations of the old school. They were obliged, therefore, as honest men, to avow their sentiments, at whatever hazard, and, in consequence, to relinquish their pastoral relations to their persuasion of the truth." (p. 70.)

This seems to settle the question as to the peculiar faith of the Church in Lancaster at the time of Mr. Harrington's ministry, which began in 1748. Mr. Harrington himself was probably not quite as Calvinistic as his church, but even he exhibited his opposition to Arminianism by voting against Mr. Rogers, an Arminian preacher in Leominster. In reference to the Church in Shrewsbury, with which the people of this place were more generally and more intimately connected, it was decidedly Calvinistic. In their covenant, adopted in the year 1723, they use this clear and decisive language, "We are of the judgment that the whole of the well known Westminster Catechism, as explained by Calvinistic divines, contains a just summary of Christian doctrines, as revealed in God's holy word."

There can be no question, then, as to the religious faith of the original inhabitants of this place. They were decidedly Calvinistic, or Orthodox and Puritanical. They embraced essentially the faith of the Puritans, who landed upon Plymouth rock in 1620. Very little, however, is known of the first settlers of this place beyond what I have here specified. Records, relating to this subject, are very rare, and those that are to be found are very deficient in the information which they contain. They inform us of the names of the original owners of the soil which you cultivate; when they

came here ; with what particular towns they were connected ; what were some of their peculiarities ; where they worshipped God ; and what particular faith they adopted. Beyond this we can learn but little. Their every day acts, their trials and enjoyments, and their peculiar habits are, to a great extent, buried in oblivion.

Christian and especially sanctuary privileges were always regarded by the early inhabitants of Massachusetts as first in importance. They were prepared to make any reasonable sacrifice for securing, perpetuating, and advancing these privileges. The early inhabitants of this town sympathized most heartily with the general feeling of the colony. They felt that these privileges must be secured. If necessary, they would go to Lancaster or Shrewsbury on the Sabbath to meet with the people of God ; but they preferred, even when they were few in number, and limited in resources, to support the gospel ministry in some convenient place of easier access.

Prompted by these feelings, they began to think as early as 1740 of becoming a distinct precinct. They petitioned the people of Shrewsbury to favor their object. This petition was uniformly opposed. Shrewsbury, at this early period felt weak, and determined not to give up the aid which she received from the citizens of this place, without strenuous resistance. The petition was repeated, but was voted down again in town meeting. At length the petition was forwarded to the General Court. Shrewsbury was summoned to show reason why the prayer of the petitioners should not be granted, and she chose a committee to oppose this petition before the Legislature. This opposition, however, was unsuccessful, the prayer of the petitioners was heard with favor, and this place was incorporated

as the North Precinct of Shrewsbury, Dec. 17, 1742. It is remarkable with what reluctance man gives up territory. Whether it be an individual, or a town, or a state, or a nation, this reluctance is equally manifest. The love of territory has deluged the earth with blood. Nations will freely give up their treasure and their best citizens for the sake of acquiring or retaining a tract of land which is liable to be lost. States and towns breathe the same spirit, and never give up till a higher power compels them ; and even the farmer, no matter how extensive his lands, desires more, can part with none, and, if needs be, will defend his small domain by litigation the most expensive and vexatious.

In the act of incorporation by which this place became a separate precinct, we notice the same jealous care that the institutions of religion be provided for and that they be perpetuated. In the report of the committee of the General Court, to whom was referred the petition of the people of this place for an act of incorporation, we find these words :—“ And they (the committee) are further of opinion that the ministry lands, lying within the North Parish, should always be for the use and improvement of the minister for the time being that may be settled in the north part aforesaid. And inasmuch as the south part have freely offered to allow the north part, on going off, in consideration of their right and interest in the meeting-house, a certain sum of money, we apprehend it will be but reasonable that they make payment thereof, viz. £32 10s lawful money, when the north part shall have erected and covered a suitable frame for a meeting-house for the worship of God among them, and that they be vested with the powers and privileges of a Precinct accordingly.”

This report of the committee was accepted by the General Court and adopted as an act of incorporation. This act was accepted by the inhabitants of this place and its conditions complied with. The first meeting of the inhabitants of the precinct under this charter was Jan. 19, 1743, about a month after the charter was granted. At this meeting they simply organized by choosing parish officers,—Dea. John Keyes moderator, John Bush clerk, and for parish committee, John Bush, Joseph Biglo, Dea. Cyprian Keyes, Joshua Houghton, and Abner Sawyer. The next meeting was the seventh of the next month, (February.)

The action of the people at that meeting clearly indicates the spirit with which they intended to comply with the conditions of their act of incorporation. 1. Voted £26 8s old tenor, for eight days preaching past. These eight days must have included every Sabbath that there had been since they were incorporated. 2. Voted £50 old tenor, for preaching for the future. 3. Voted that Daniel Hastings, Abner Sawyer and Joseph Biglo be a committee to provide a minister. 4. Voted that the centre of the north precinct in Shrewsbury, that is south of the Quinnepoxet river, or the nearest convenient spot to the centre, be the place to set the meeting-house on. 5. Voted that Capt. Flagg be the surveyor to find the centre of the north precinct in Shrewsbury. 6. Jonathan Livermore was chosen in case Capt. Flagg fails this week. At an adjournment of this meeting to the 18th Feb. 1743, “1. Tryed whether they would adjourn the building of the meeting-house for the present, and it passed in the negative. 2. Voted to build a meeting-house forthwith. 3. Voted to build said house forty-five feet long, thirty-five wide and twenty feet between joints. 4. Voted to choose a com-

mittee to build said house, and that said committee shall have the frame of said house up and covered with boards and shingles agreeable for said house, and rough boarded around the sides, by the first of June next."

This meeting was on the eighteenth of February; when these energetic and devoted men, few in number, weak in resources, in a new country which had but recently been broken by the plough, with a forest almost unbroken on every side of them, voted that they would erect and cover a meeting-house by the first of next June, a little more than three months. Those residing in the north precinct, who were the professed followers of the Saviour, and were in covenant relation with the church in the south precinct of the town, prepared a petition the next September, asking that their relation to said church might be dissolved, for the purpose of uniting with other professors in organizing a new church in the north precinct. This petition is found in the church records of Shrewsbury, and reads thus:—"To the church in Shrewsbury: A number of the members of the same, and dwelling in the north precinct, in said town, wisheth grace, mercy and peace, Reverend, Honored and Beloved,—Whereas we, the subscribers, together with others of said precinct, and covenanting with us, are, as we trust, in God's providence, called to incorporate into a particular church unity of our Lord,—these are, therefore, humbly to request your leave therefore; and that you grant us a dismission from you, and an interest in your prayers, that God would not only settle the gospel ordinances and institutions among us, but also grant that pure religion might in this place flourish and abound. We subscribe ourselves your brethren in faith and fellowship. (Signed,) John Keyes, deacon, and twelve

others. (Dated,) North Precinct in Shrewsbury, Sept. 7, 1743. This request appears to have been granted without any opposition by the church in the south precinct. The next month, Oct. 6, 1743, the church in Shrewsbury, by their Pastor and delegates, assisted in organizing this church, which then consisted of nineteen male members, and which has been perpetuated till the present time.

This was the early spirit of puritan Massachusetts. A community might be small, they might be poor, but never small enough, nor poor enough to live without the institutions of the gospel. For years, those nineteen men had travelled for miles with their families on the Sabbath, to meet the people of God at His sanctuary. They had travelled in different directions, some to Shrewsbury, and some to Lancaster; but distance was by no means an insuperable obstacle. A spirit of true piety, like that which filled the hearts of the descendants of those who landed on Plymouth Rock in 1620, shrinks from no hardship and refuses no sacrifice. It was the same spirit that, for conscience sake, left the shores of the old world, crossed the ocean, and faced the dangers, the inclemency and the hardship of the new world, in the month of Dec., when civilized man had not felled the first tree.

The next August sixteen females were dismissed from the south church in Shrewsbury, and recommended to this church—most of them were the wives of the brethren who became members of the church at its organization. This made twenty-nine who came to this church from Shrewsbury. Who the others were who were united with them, or where they came from, I have not been able to learn.*

* The early records of this church, till the year 1774, are not to be found, or they are not in possession of the church.

In a precinct meeting, held on the 23d of Feb. 1743, only five days after the meeting at which they voted to build the meeting house, after choosing a moderator, "tried whether they would have any more ministers preach to them before they made choice, and it passed in the negative." At this meeting Mr. Ebenezer Morse was invited to settle with and over them, in the gospel ministry, and they "voted to give him £400 old tenor for a settlement, and £160 old tenor a year salary for the first two years, and then £5 old tenor more every year, gaining £5 every year till it comes to £180 old tenor; provided that the said Morse shall give a quit-claim of the ministerial lands that are in the north precinct in Shrewsbury to said precinct, if it be by them requested." These terms not being acceded to by Mr. Morse, at the next precinct meeting, March 23, 1743, "voted to increase his salary £10 per year after the first two years, till it become £200 old tenor, a year, and so to be higher or lower as provisions shall rise or fall from this time forward, allowing wheat to be at this time 20s per bushel, rye 15s, Indian 10s, Oats 6s in the north precinct in Shrewsbury; and pork at 18d per lb., and beef at 11d per lb. in Boston." There was also a change made in the proposed settlement. These terms were agreed to by Mr. Morse, and he gave his answer in the affirmative. After receiving Mr. Morse's answer, the next business of the church and precinct was to decide upon the time for the ordination, and to make suitable provision for that occasion. The time assigned for the ordination was Oct. 27, 1743. They also agreed to send to six churches to assist in council on this occasion, and chose a committee "to make provision for the ministers and churches sent to, and also to make provision for all transient ministers and scholars."

The ordination took place at the time appointed, viz., Oct. 26, 1743, and probably in the new meeting-house, fitted up for the occasion. The house at the time of the ordination was in a rough, unfinished state, having neither pulpit nor pew,—even the floor was not laid, nor the doors nor windows provided. The next season, 1744, the meeting house was nearly finished. Individuals who were able, built their own pews in such parts of the house as the precinct permitted. And the practice of individuals, building for themselves a pew in some unoccupied place in the meeting-house, was continued for at least twenty years. Every year there were petitions presented at the precinct meetings, by different persons worshipping in the house, for permission to build for themselves a pew in some unoccupied specified place in the house. These petitions were always granted by the precinct, though sometimes upon certain conditions with which the petitioners must comply. It may not be uninteresting for the purpose of learning more fully the customs of the precinct at this time, to give a specimen of those petitions.

In a warrant issued Sept. 21, 1761, “the first year of the reign of his majesty George the Third,” we find the following article to be acted upon: “To hear a petition of Dinah Bennet, Zillah Taylor and others, petitioning for liberty to build and enjoy a pew in the vacancy behind the long gallery in the east end of the meeting-house, and act thereon as they shall think proper.” The meeting for which this warrant was issued assembled the fifth day of October, 1761, and the action upon this article of the warrant is thus recorded:—“Tryed a vote on the petition of Dinah Bennett, Zillah Taylor and others, which is as follows, viz. ‘To the inhabitants of the second precinct in Shrewsbury, We, the

subscribers, inhabitants of said precinct, humbly pray that you would grant us the vacancy behind the hind seat (out to the stair curb) in the meeting-house long gallery, in the east end of the meeting-house in said precinct, in order for us to build and enjoy a pew. If you shall see cause to grant us our request, you will oblige your petitioners, who shall, as we are in duty bound, ever pray—Dinah Bennett, Zillah Taylor, Betty Howe, Tamah Howe, Tabitha Maynard, Betty Taylor, Abigail Keyes, Tabitha Holland, Eunice Holland, Sarah Witherby, Bulah Child, Susannah Child.—Shrewsbury 2d precinct, Sept. 4, 1761,—and it passed in the affirmative.” These petitions were not always nor generally presented by the ladies, but they were generally similar in their phraseology, and were received with favor by the precinct.

These customs were peculiar to the times in which they lived, though not probably to this precinct. Should the records of other towns of the same period be examined, we should undoubtedly find that they had customs, if not the same of this precinct, equally singular in our estimation.

A cause of great distress and embarrassment at that day was the unsettled state of the currency—to which allusion has already been made. It was several years before any satisfactory arrangement could be made in reference to Mr. Morse's salary. The bills in circulation depreciated so much in value that the precinct voted, for many years, an addition to his annual salary. In the fall of 1748, the precinct made a proposal to Mr. Morse, in reference to the amount of his salary, which he felt would not give him a support. To that proposal he made this reply: “North Precinct in Shrewsbury, Oct. 31, 1748—To the inhabitants of said Pre-

cinct now assembled, Brethren, the design of this epistle is to let you know that should I accept of the sum you voted me at the last meeting, as being satisfactory for my labors among you for the time you refer to in your note, it would be going a warfare too much at my own charge, and therefore I cannot see it in my way to accept it. From your helper in Christ,—Ebenezer Morse.”

On the thirtieth of the next January, (1749,) an arrangement was made which appeared more satisfactory to both parties, and which to a certain extent obviated the difficulty which grew out of the fluctuating state of the currency. A vote was passed to grant “the sum of one hundred and thirty-three ounces of silver, or as much money in bills of public credit as shall procure the silver above said, or that shall be equivalent to said silver, for the Rev. Ebenezer Morse’s salary, annually.” To this sum there were frequent additions made to supply a deficiency which existed in his support. Except the difficulty concerning the salary, there appears to have been peace and harmony between Mr. Morse and his people for about twenty-five years.

Mr. Morse was born in Medfield, March 2d, 1718; graduated at Harvard University in 1737—studied law about a year with Hon. John Chandler, a stern and unyielding royalist. He afterwards studied medicine and theology. In Nov. 1745, he was married to Miss Persis Bush, the daughter of John Bush, and aunt of the late Col. Jotham Bush. When ordained he was about twenty-five years of age. The period during which he was the minister of this people, was, by far, the best part of his life. He here became the father of a large family of children—some of whom died in infancy or childhood,—and others survived him. He began his

ministry here when the precinct and the church began—when there could have been but little to invite beyond the mere desire of doing good, and when there must have been much to discourage.

The controversy in reference to the amount of salary, was evidently the result of the times and circumstances in which he lived. It was perpetually depreciating in consequence of the state of the currency—at most it was really less than he needed for a comfortable support, and yet more than his parishoners with their scanty income, felt able to pay. They, in common with their minister, felt the distress occasioned by the state of the currency. The facilities for converting their produce into money were few—no market of easy access,—all producers of the fruits of the earth, and none to buy the articles which all had to sell.

The territorial limits of his parish were more extensive than those of the present town of Boylston, including a part of the town of West Boylston. During this period of twenty-five years there were some exciting events which transpired in the country, which must have been regarded with deep interest by Mr. Morse and his people. The almost perpetual warfare between England and France was deeply felt during some part of this period by the people of the Colonies.

About the year 1755, circumstances occurred which occasioned many bloody conflicts of the English and Americans with the French and Indians. In some parts of the country the cruelty of Indian warfare appeared with all the severity of former days. Massachusetts at this time was not so great a sufferer in this respect as she had been during the last half of the preceding century. But even Massachusetts and the north precinct of Shrewsbury must have felt the deepest interest in

these bloody transactions, in which their countrymen so severely and so frequently suffered. This is called "the old French war," and continued till about the year 1763, when a treaty of peace was entered into between Great Britain and France. But even at this time causes were at work which were to produce a war, the effects of which would be most deeply felt by every citizen of the colonies.

The colonies were severely oppressed by the mother country; the question of revolt began to be discussed; the spirit of revolution was every day more and more decisive; almost all churches sympathized in the hostile movements of the country, and every apologist for the oppressive acts of parliament was regarded as a traitor to his country. At this time of uncompromising opposition to the British government, when the spirit of revolution ran high, Mr. Morse sympathized with the mother country. He was a Royalist, or a Tory. The principles, by which he was prompted to take this position, were not to be thought of in justification of his course of action. A large majority of his people and his church breathed a spirit of determined resistance to parliamentary aggression, and in this spirit, very naturally, arose a feeling of jealousy and hostility to their pastor.

Though it was far more difficult at that day to dissolve the pastoral relation than it is at present, yet they began to take steps preliminary to a change in the ministry. A meeting of the church was called Oct. 24th, 1774, at the request of a large number of the members; the difficulties subsisting between pastor and church taken into consideration; and a committee chosen to wait upon Mr. Morse, requesting him to meet the church; or, if he declined, to put into their hands a

copy of certain specified parts of the records, together with another paper which he had recently read to them. These requests not being acceded to by Mr. Morse, the meeting was continued by adjournments till March 2, 1775, when it was proposed to refer their difficulties to a council. At a subsequent meeting the members of the council were selected, and a committee chosen to prepare letters missive. At a church meeting, March 20, 1775, the records say "After conferring upon matters of difficulty, found matters so perplexed that we knew not what to do." On the 3d of April, 1775, "chose a committee to confer with Mr. Morse in reference to our difficulties." This committee reported at an adjourned meeting the next week, "That Mr. Morse declared, by word of mouth, 'that he would not join with the church in a council, unless the letters missive, shall express, that the council determine our difficulties by Congregational principles, and that neither the Bible nor the Cambridge platform should be the rule for them to determine our difficulties by.'"

The church then "voted to invite the parish to unite with the church in order to see if by any means Mr. Morse could not be prevailed upon to come into some measures that might accommodate the difficulties." This effort, as well as the plan for having a council, was wholly ineffectual. At a church meeting, May 1, 1775, they chose another committee to wait upon Mr. Morse. Met again 22d inst. by adjournment, when, the records say, they found themselves "in such perplexity that they knew not what to do." June 8, 1775, the church records say "finding that Mr. Morse would not join with the church in a council upon any terms that they can think consistent with the liberties wherewith Christ hath made his church free, and that a party council was

not likely to answer any good purpose, and now being in the last extremity, finding that all attempts to heal and accommodate the difficulties were to no purpose, to live as they were they dare not, and seeing no other way than to attend to the last remedy where the elder offend incorrigibly,—as we cannot have advice of council so to remove him from office by the same power by which he was called, viz., by the church ; therefore concluded to use our power and privilege, and accordingly made out a notification for a church meeting in order to remove the Rev. Ebenezer Morse from his pastoral office to this church.” Agreeably to the notification issued, the church met June 12th, 1775, “and after considering and fairly debating the matter, it was motioned and seconded that the vote be put to see whether the church will dismiss Mr. Morse from his pastoral office to this church.” Then the moderator put the vote in these words, “Brethren, if it be your minds to dismiss the Rev. Ebenezer Morse from his pastoral office to the Second Church of Christ in Shrewsbury, manifest it. It passed in the affirmative by a division of fourteen yeas to four nays.” After choosing a committee to desire the parish committee to call a precinct meeting to see if they will concur with the church in dismissing Mr. Morse, and to draw up in proper form their reasons for dismissing him, they adjourned for three days, till June 15, 1775, when the following document, specifying their reasons for the summary action which they had taken, was read and accepted. “The Rev. Ebenezer Morse, appearing so unfriendly to the common cause of liberty, which America so much contends for at this day, gave occasion for the town of Shrewsbury to call him to an account by a Committee of enquiry, and the said Mr. Morse, when upon exami-

nation before said committee, and before said town, after said committee gave in their report, did so conduct and word himself that the town as well as the committee did view him as unfriendly to the common cause, and in consequence thereof, did vote that said Mr. Morse be disarmed and laid under other disadvantages,—in consequence of which, together with the other difficulties subsisting, we cannot see how we can in conscience be contented with him as our pastor, and are of opinion that we shall expose ourselves to the displeasure of the Congresses and all others that are friends and well-wishers to the rights and liberties of America, if we should suffer him to continue any longer as our pastor, and give these as our reasons for dismissing the Rev. Mr. Morse from the Second Church in Shrewsbury.”

This document being presented to the parish, appears to have received their concurrence, and Mr. Morse was thus dismissed without the sanction of an ecclesiastical council. Subsequently, however, the church called an exparte council, who advised them to propose to Mr. Morse to choose four more churches to join with these three present, to hear and advise upon all matters of difficulty subsisting in this place. This proposal Mr. Morse declined. The council then advised that three more churches be added to them, and that they adjourn to meet again November 7th, i. e. in two weeks, for the purpose of some more definite action. This advice being followed by the church, they adjourned, and met accordingly, Nov. 7th, 1775, and continued their meeting by adjournment till the 10th, when the council advised the church to reconsider the vote dismissing Mr. Morse, and then proceed to a formal dismissal with their sanction. The church

followed this advice, and thus Mr. Morse was dismissed with the sanction of an ecclesiastical council, Nov. 10, 1775, having been the minister of this church thirty-two years and fifteen days.

Mr. Morse, however, regarded all of these proceedings, both of the church and of the council, as of no authority, and though excluded from the pulpit, he still esteemed himself the minister of this people. He afterwards continued his labors in this place as a minister of Christ, preaching, for several years, to a minority of his former people who sympathized with him in his political views. He also practised as a physician, and employed his superior classical education in preparing young men for the University. For many years after this, Mr. Morse and his adherents frequently remonstrated with the church and society whenever they made any important move for sustaining and perpetuating the ministry and gospel ordinances in this place.

Mr. Morse is said to have possessed a strong, clear, and vigorous mind, a bold and independent spirit, keen and ready wit, and a kind, benevolent and christian heart. He had uncommon versatility of talent. "He was so bright in the classics," says his biographer, "as to command, in his retired location, a school of young gentlemen preparing to enter college; and it was under his thorough tuition and inspiring influence that the foundation of the literary eminence of many in our early history was laid."

After the dismissal of Mr. Morse, the church remained without a pastor a few days less than a year and four months. During this period the pulpit was supplied with such candidates as they were able to obtain with occasional help from the pastors of the neighboring churches. Dr. Sumner, Mr. Avery and Mr.

Maccarty were especially favorable to them, and frequently gave them aid and counsel.

The next January, 1776, the church gave a call to Mr. Jesse Reed to settle with them in the Gospel ministry. This call Mr. Reed declined, and though urged to reconsider his decision, persisted in his determination. Nothing now can be found of Mr. Reed's history, except the fact of his being invited to settle over this people, and declining the invitation.

For many years in this church, as in other churches in New England, the half-way covenant was in use, i. e. they admitted persons into covenant with them without requiring them to come to the Lord's Supper. Soon after the dismissal of Mr. Morse, the church voted, "That, in their opinion, the half-way covenant, so called, hath no foundation in the word of God; it is, therefore, our opinion that said covenant ought not to be practised any longer in this precinct." This clear and decisive vote, however, was not the final disposition of this covenant, for we find, by the church records, that it was in use more than forty years after this date.

The next move which the church made for re-establishing the Gospel ministry among them, was in Oct. 1776, when they gave a call to Mr. Eleazer Fairbanks. The parish concurred with the church in giving this call. It was accepted by Mr. Fairbanks, and he was ordained the next spring. Mr. Fairbanks was born in Preston, Ct., Graduated at Brown University, 1775, and was ordained March 27, 1777. The council convened for his ordination March 26, and the day was spent in hearing Mr. Morse's objections, which objections were overruled, and the ordination took place next day. The salary and settlement offered to Mr. Fairbanks were the same that were offered to Mr. Reed, viz, £66 13s 4d salary

and £133, 6^s 8^d settlement. His salary was afterwards increased to £70, and his settlement to £180=\$233,33 for salary, and \$600 for settlement.

In the fall of 1781 he was married to Miss Sarah Bigelow, daughter of Deacon Amariah Bigelow, one of the officers of his own church. On the settlement of Mr. Fairbanks, the church consisted of 71 members—29 males and 42 females. The limits of the precinct at this time included an important part of the town of West Boylston. There was then no church nor religious society within the limits of that town. The population of the town was then sparse, and, comparatively, a small part of the church in this place, belonged there. Even in 1810, the time of the first census after its incorporation, and thirty-seven years after the date of which we now speak, there were only six hundred and thirty-two inhabitants in the whole town of West Boylston, including in addition to the territory once belonging to this town, a section from Sterling and another from Holden.

In the spring of 1777, soon after the settlement of Mr. Fairbanks, the church introduced Watts version of the Psalms and Hymns, including his three books of hymns. And about this time, probably, the present mode of church music was also adopted. Sacred music during the ministry of Mr. Fairbanks, appears to have been at a low ebb. Most of the time this service was performed by the congregation, very imperfectly when in their best manner, and sometimes so weak were they in performing it, that they were obliged to omit it in the worship of God on the Sabbath. The church felt the importance of some improvement in the manner of their singing, and repeatedly petitioned the precinct to adopt measures by which this improvement could be

secured. The precinct appears to have given them but little help.

In the warrant for March meeting, in the year 1781, we find this article:—"To see if the precinct will permit the singers to sit together in the front gallery, or allow them such a part of it as the precinct shall think proper." In reference to this article, they "voted to do nothing about it."

In the following December, 1781, a petition was presented to the precinct by Dea. Cyprian Keyes and eleven others, praying for some help by which the singing should be improved. A precinct meeting was called, and "Voted, to continue Congregational singing; also, voted to choose a committee to propose some way in which singing should be performed in this congregation." The result of this petition was that the precinct "chose seven choristers to tune the Psalms." "Also, voted the two hind seats, below, both men's side and women's, for the use of the singers." Here the precinct, as a special favor, grant the singers the back seat on the lower floor that they may sit together. In February, 1783, Dea. Amariah Bigelow and five others presented a petition, "To see if the precinct will grant to the use of the singers the front gallery, both men and women's side, all but the fore seat, so long as they shall perform singing with decency and good order." This petition was not granted. This appears to have been the last effort during the ministry of Mr. Fairbanks to improve the singing. The friends of the effort probably left the singing to take care of itself, and the congregation to enjoy or endure it as they might be able.

During the time of the ministry of Mr. Fairbanks both the church and Mr. Morse made frequent attempts to bring about a reconciliation between him and his

adherents, and the church, but without much success. In September, 1780, the church chose a committee to confer with Mr. Morse and his adherents, and "desire their personal attendance before this church to offer their reasons for their absenting." The result of this effort was that Mr. Morse came before the church but none of his adherents; no good appears to have been accomplished. In November, 1784, the church "Voted that the absenting members, heretofore called upon by this church, such as are not chargeable with any immorality, upon suing and acknowledging their error in tarrying away, and returning to their duty, may be restored to charity and received to Christian communion." In 1792 Mr. Morse addressed a letter to the church proposing a mutual council; this proposal the church declined. In the following December, 1792, Mr Fairbanks made a request to the church for a dismissal. This request the church first refused, but soon after granted, and his dismissal took place, with the sanction of an ecclesiastical council, April 23, 1793.

The period of Mr. Fairbanks's ministry was, in some respects, one of deep interest. His ministry began when the struggle was going on for the independence of these United States. The question was by no means settled whether we should be able to maintain the declaration which we had sent out the year before. Great Britain was strong, and would not give up these Colonies without exerting that strength to the uttermost. When this question was settled in our favor, and peace returned, then this new republic, in its infancy, must adopt measures by which the liberty, which they had bought with so much blood and sacrifice, might be perpetuated. During his entire ministry there was also,

practically, a seceding church with a minister in his immediate vicinity. Between these two bodies—two when they ought to have been one, both parties undoubtedly blameworthy, feeling conscious of guilt and secretly desiring relief by having a union—there must have been a spirit of jealousy; each desiring to relieve itself by charging blame upon the other, or by making some overture by which a union might be effected—neither party ready to do their full duty, but each desirous that the other should come to their terms. That such was the state of feeling, is too evident from the frequent attempts of both parties to bring about a reconciliation during the whole ministry of Mr. Fairbanks.

During the whole of this period Mr. Morse claimed that he had not been dismissed from the church according to Christian and ecclesiastical usage, and consequently that he was rightly the minister of the North Precinct in Shrewsbury. On the other hand, Mr. Fairbanks's church felt that these claims were groundless, and that both he and his adherents were guilty of a breach of covenant in absenting themselves from the fellowship and worship of that church. During this period, also, the towns of Sterling, Berlin, and Boylston were incorporated. The incorporation of this town was strenuously opposed, and obtained after long delay; it took place in the month of March 1786, about forty-three years after it had become an incorporated precinct.

After Mr. Fairbanks left this place, he went to Wilmington, Vt., where, it is said, he remained but a few years, and, after frequent changes, both in place and sentiment, finally died in Palmyra, N. Y., 1821. Mr. Fairbanks was the minister of this people sixteen years, one month and sixteen days. During his ministry one

hundred and thirteen persons were admitted to the church—eighty-eight by profession, and twenty-five by letter; and sixty-six were removed from the church by letter, death, and otherwise. The question of receiving members upon the half-way covenant was by no means settled, notwithstanding the decisive vote which had been taken by the church previous to his settlement. There was evidently a diversity of opinion on this subject, if not in his church, certainly among his people, and the advocates for the practice had sufficient influence to prevent the church from repeating what they had once said with so much boldness and truth. There is, however, no evidence that I notice in the record, that Mr. Fairbanks, during his ministry, received any members into the church, who were not in full communion.

After the dismissal of Mr. Fairbanks, the church made no movement, of which we find any record, in reference to the settlement of a successor, before the next autumn—when they proceeded to give a call to Mr. Hezekiah Hooper. This call was concurred in by the town, and was accepted by Mr. Hooper. In the month of February, 1794, previous to his ordination, the church observed a day of fasting, and, as was the usual practice at that time, invited several of the neighboring clergymen to unite with them and assist them. On this occasion they invited Drs. Puffer, Sumner, Thayer and Holcomb, with Rev. Mr. Whitney. They convened at the school-house, Feb. 6, 1794, and they were met there by Mr. Morse, and an attempt was made to settle the difficulties subsisting between him and the church. This difficulty had existed for more than twenty years; had been the occasion of the dismissal of Mr. Morse, of a division and actual separation in the church, and of unceasing trial and annoyance to both

parties during the whole time. Each felt that most of the blame attached to the other party, and crimination and recrimination were often made, jealousy and frequent altercations took place, and, often repeated, but always unsuccessful, attempts were made on both sides to effect a settlement. The question at this time was referred to the clergymen present. "It being moved and seconded, to see if the church will ask the advice of the above-named gentlemen that were present, what line of conduct said church shall pursue in regard to Mr. Morse and his adhering members, and it passed in the affirmative." At the same time the church also asked the advice of these clergymen with regard to the half-way covenant. Before asking this advice, the church had voted that they would not join with Mr. Morse in a council. During the time of these difficulties, which were so enduring and so trying, the respective parties had frequently proposed to each other to submit the whole question to an ecclesiastical council. These proposals had uniformly been declined by the party to whom they were made. The advice given was in these words:

"BOYLSTON, February 6, 1794.

"Whereas, the brethren of the Church of Christ in Boylston have desired the advice of the under-written, on the following points, viz: The line of conduct proper for them to pursue relative to the Rev. Mr. Morse and his adherents,—also, relative to the use of what has been usually called the half-way covenant. We say, in relation to Mr. Morse and his adherents, our advice is, that whereas Mr. Morse has charged the church with a departure from their original covenant; that the church serve him with an attested copy of their late proceedings on that subject, which will set that matter in a true light—that a vote be passed expressing the willingness of the church to indulge Mr. Morse and his adherents in all Christian privileges when he or they shall be disposed to enjoy the same; and in regard to such as Mr. Morse has admitted to special privilege, that

the church stand ready, at their request, to admit them to the same privileges.

“Relative to what is usually termed the half-way Covenant, we give it as our advice, that there be but one covenant made use of; but when such, as in a judgment of charity are desirous and well-disposed, wish to have baptism for their children, but entertain scruples of their fitness to come to the table of the Lord, that they be allowed to receive baptism for their children upon making public profession of religion; and that they be admitted to full communion when these scruples shall be removed, without reading the covenant to them the second time.

Signed,

JOSEPH SUMNER,
PETER WHITNEY,
REUBEN HOLCOMB,
REUBEN PUFFER,
NATH'L THAYER.”

What the effect of this advice was in reference to the difficulties subsisting between the church and Mr. Morse, is not known. One thing, however, is certain, that the difficulties were not removed. The advice, in reference to the half-way covenant, reversed the vote of the church passed previous to the settlement of Mr. Fairbanks and brought back the practice of receiving members upon that covenant, which practice was continued in the church for more than twenty years after this date.

The town having concurred with the church in giving a call to Mr. Hooper, the council for his ordination was convened March 12, 1794. At the opening of this council “a paper was presented to them, signed by twenty persons, from the westerly part of the town, signifying their intentions to have a religious society by themselves, and manifesting their perfect neutrality in the present ordination.” A remonstrance was also presented by Mr. Ebenezer Morse, “against any persons being ordained over him and this church, until he had

been formally and regularly heard in an ecclesiastical council, as he presumed that he had never had a regular dismissal."

"The council voted that they considered neither of these papers as any bar to the ordination," and consequently Mr. Hooper was ordained and installed over this people.

The first of these papers is the first hint that appears upon the church records of any move to organize a new church and society in that part of the town now called West Boylston. This move grew out of a controversy between the inhabitants of the eastern and western portions of the town in reference to the location of a meeting-house which they had finished the year before. The first move towards the erection of this house was made in the year 1791. A warm controversy arose as to its location, repeated committees were chosen, both from this town and from neighboring towns. The town was surveyed and measured to find the centre, or in some way to fix upon a spot that would be satisfactory to all parties, but without success. The location recently occupied by it, where the Centre School-house now stands, was finally selected, and the majority, controlling the town, built the house upon that spot, which was finished in 1793, at an expense of about \$4500. Its location was the immediate cause of a division in the town, of the organization of a new church, the incorporation of a second precinct, and after much contention and litigation, resulted in the incorporation of the town of West Boylston.

This controversy, which began as soon as it was decided to build a new house, was carried on with great bitterness on both sides; neither disposed to yield to the wishes of the other; each, in their turn, making

new proposals, by which they hoped to bring their opponents to their terms; both claiming to be governed by principles of right, and mutually and warmly condemning the unreasonable and extravagant demands of each other. A little yielding, on both sides, might have calmed the troubled waters, prevented the division of the town at that time, and wholly changed the future history of both churches, societies and towns. Such instances of men's obstinacy and perverseness, are, unquestionably, overruled by God for good; he brings good out of evil, the wrath of man is made to praise him; nevertheless, man is taught to forbear, to feel that he may be demanding too much, or if not more than is right, it may be more than is expedient, and, therefore, best to relinquish even his just dues, rather than press them too strenuously.

The first of the papers presented to the council, viz., the remonstrance of Mr. Morse, makes known to us the relation which, in his own estimation, he sustained to this church and people. He still claimed to be their minister; rejected, as invalid, all their proceedings against him; denied the authority of the council which sanctioned his dismissal, and repudiated, as illegal and contrary to ecclesiastical usage, every movement by which he had been excluded from the pulpit. He regarded himself as wronged and oppressed by those who ought to have been his friends, merely because his political opinions differed from theirs. The validity of his claims of course depended upon the conditions of his original settlement in 1743, more than half a century before, and upon the usages and the times in which he lived.

At the present day his claims would have been regarded as invalid, but in his day there might have been

a question whether he could not have maintained them either in a court of justice, or before an impartial mutual ecclesiastical council. The council which was assembled for the purpose of ordaining Mr. Hooper treated his remonstrance as presenting no bar to their proceeding with the ordination, and of course, as based upon no valid claims which he had upon the church and precinct.

The salary of Mr. Hooper was £115= \$383 33. He began his ministry under favorable auspices. The excitement which had prevailed throughout the country during the last twenty years, in connexion with the revolution, and also the peculiar trials which this church and precinct had passed through during the same period, had now, to a great extent, ceased. The only serious trial which afflicted the people at the time of his settlement, was the division which existed, both in the precinct and church, in consequence of the location of their new meeting-house. The disaffected members, however, both of the church and precinct, were only a small minority, while the majority, who were united in the locating and building of the meeting house, and also in the settlement of Mr. Hooper, were able, without any serious burden, to meet the expenses necessary for the support of the Gospel. At the time of his settlement, the church consisted of one hundred and eighteen members, arranged in his records in the following manner :

Deacons and their wives,	9		
Brethren and their wives,	72		
Widows,	21		
Maidens,	5	Males,	46
Wives of non-professors,	11	Females,	72
	—		—
Total,	118		118

The use of the half-way covenant which had been voted by the church as unscriptural, before the settlement of Mr. Fairbanks, and which appears to have been discontinued during the sixteen years of his ministry, was restored to the church by the advice of five clergymen from the adjacent towns, who met here, at the request of the church, about five weeks previous to the ordination of Mr. Hooper, to unite with them in observing a fast, and to aid and assist them by their counsel, and this covenant was used by him in the receiving of members during his short ministry. Fifteen members were admitted by him to the church by profession, and five by letter; and the party, who for more than eighteen years, had adhered to Mr. Morse, and sustained worship distinct from the original church and society, returned and enjoyed, under Mr. Hooper, the same privileges which had been allowed them by Mr. Morse.

The next July after the ordination of Mr. Hooper, (1794) Mr. Morse called an *exparte* council upon whose result the church took no definite action. Separate worship appears not to have been continued by Mr. Morse and his adherents after the settlement of Mr. Hooper, the successor of Mr. Fairbanks. They then became members of Mr. Hooper's congregation, and the controversy subsided. Mr. Morse continued a resident in this town till the year 1802, when he died at the age of eighty-three years, nine months and twenty-one days—a little more than fifty-eight years after his ordination, and a little more than twenty-six years after his dismissal. His wife died May 6, 1788, nearly fourteen years before.

The only member now living, who was admitted by Mr. Hooper, is Mr. Elijah Ball, who is the oldest member of this church, having publicly professed

Christ April 13th, 1794, more than fifty-eight years since. The father of Mr. Ball, the oldest member of this church who was living when I came to this town, was admitted March 26th, 1777, in the time of the revolution, before the incorporation of the town, and but little more than a year after the dismissal of Mr. Morse. The ministry of Mr. Hooper was brief. The last record which I find in his hand writing was made June 28, 1795, when he records the admission of John Crawford and wife as members of this church upon the half-way covenant, and the same day records the baptism of Sally, the daughter of John Crawford. Soon after this he went to Bridgewater, where his friends resided, and died of consumption Dec. 2, 1795. Mr. Hooper graduated at Harvard University 1789, and is described by Mr. Davenport, in his history of Boylston, as "a young man of good talents and attainments, a gentleman in his manners, and a pattern of meekness and humility." He was the minister of this people one year, nine months and twenty-five days.

At the time of the settlement of Mr. Hooper, both the church and the town were in a divided and unsettled state, in consequence of their disagreement as to the locating of their new meeting house, and the day was near when the west part of the town was to become a separate incorporation, and the members of the church, in that section of the town, were to withdraw and be organized into a distinct church.

The next June, after the death of Mr. Hooper, the west part of the town, with certain other lands, was incorporated by the name of Second Precinct in Boylston, Sterling and Holden, and in the following Sept. 1796, the Congregational Church in West Boylston was organized. Fourteen persons were dismissed from

this church for the purpose of uniting with that at the time of its organization, and thus before a call was given to a successor to Mr. Hooper, the division, both in the town and church, was complete and permanent.

Soon after the death of Mr. Hooper, "the church set apart a day for fasting and prayer, that the death of the late Rev. Hezekiah Hooper might be sanctified to the church and town, and that the church and town might be directed in the choice of an able minister to settle in the work of the ministry, in and over said church and town." And the following September, 1776, the church voted a call to Mr. Ward Cotton "to settle with and over them in the Gospel ministry, according to the Cambridge Platform." This vote was concurred in by the town, Mr. Cotton accepted the call, and was ordained the 7th day of June following, 1797, one year, six months and five days after the death of Mr. Hooper.

Mr. Cotton was born in Plymouth March 24, 1770, and graduated at Harvard College in 1793. The condition both of the church and the town at the time of Mr. Cotton's settlement, was similar to its condition at the time of the settlement of Mr. Hooper, if we except the fact that the division caused by the location of the meeting house, was now marked by distinct organizations. That part of the town, now forming a part of West Boylston, was no longer connected either with this church or parish. This separation, however, was not made without the most strenuous opposition on the part of the people of this town. A committee consisting of Jotham Bush and Jonathan Fassett was chosen to oppose the act of incorporation before the General Court. A petition of Ezra Beaman and others was presented to the General Court, requesting that they might be incorporated into a separate town. This was

the petition that Messrs. Bush and Fassett were to oppose ; and the town instructed them "To present a memorial to the General Court, employ counsel, take depositions, if they think proper, to support the cause, and take every other such method they shall deem necessary to state the matter in a fair and candid manner before the Legislature of the Commonwealth.—Boylston, June 4, 1795."

The memorial which was furnished them by the town was a very able document, and calculated to make an impression upon the mind of any reflecting man. How much influence this committee, with the powers given them by the town, had, we can decide only by the result of the petition. They were not incorporated into a town agreeably to the petition, but they succeeded in being incorporated as a separate precinct. This act of incorporation together with the organization of the church, could not have been regarded as an evil by Mr. Cotton and his church, if they considered the state of feeling which existed in the two parts of the town. With this disaffection, a forced union must have been attended with unhappy consequences. By this division he found himself the minister of a smaller parish and church, but they were united, both among themselves and in him. A small church and parish with union, is stronger and can do more good, than a larger church and society without union.

The salary of Mr. Cotton was the same as that paid to Mr. Hooper, viz. £115=/\$383 33—this, however, was increased during the last few years of his ministry. This salary, however, during the war of 1812, and at other periods of his connexion with this people, was inadequate to his support, and he suffered severely from the embarrassment that unavoidably came upon him.

Mr. Cotton attempted and effected some desirable changes in the early part of his ministry, in reference to the discipline and order of the church. The practice of receiving members into the church upon the half-way covenant, was continued till the year 1817, when the practice seems to have been discontinued without any special action of the church in reference to it. During many years previous to Mr. Cotton's ministry, there had been in the Congregational church in New England, and especially in Massachusetts a gradually increasing difference of christian doctrines,—many of the clergy with their churches, were calvinistic, adhered to the strict principles and practices of the puritans, while there were others who had abandoned the principles upon which all relied for salvation, in the early period of the settlement of New England. The system of Christian doctrine which was received and taught by the puritans, is embodied essentially in the Westminster Assembly's Catechism as was understood by the early settlers, both of Lancaster and Shrewsbury, to be the faith once delivered to the saints.

At the time of the settlement of Mr. Cotton, many of the clergy of Massachusetts had become Armenians. They continued however to be one and the same denomination—were free in their exchanges, and generally cordial in their fellowship. During Mr. Cotton's ministry, the difference in Christian views and doctrines of the two parties was on the increase, and some of the trials of his ministry grew out of this difference of religious opinion. He did not claim to be a strict calvinist. In his views he was more in sympathy with the more liberal divines. Some of his church being strict calvinists, made known their dissent, and in some cases withdrew and united with other denomi-

nations, while in others they withdrew and attended upon the worship of God with the same denomination out of town. Without a regular dismissal, they abandoned the fellowship of the church. Ordinarily such a course could not be justified upon the principles of the Word of God; whether it were right and Christian in this particular case, must be left to the decision of Him who shall be our final Judge, and who is too wise to err.

This course of conduct on the part of some of the members of the church, was noticed, both by the pastor and his flock. Judging from the records, there appears to have been no hasty and rash move by either party, though both parties exhibited a determination that was absolutely immovable.

The matter was referred first to a mutual council, and afterwards to an *exparte* council. The mutual council dissolved without coming to any result,—the *exparte* council came to a result which was satisfactory to the party which called it, but gave no satisfaction to the other party. The difficulty began in 1810, and ended in 1814. It must have been for the time being a severe trial to all who were in any way concerned in it.

Subsequent to the adjustment of this difficulty, nothing of special interest appears upon the church records till 1825, when the pastor of the church was requested by seven of the brethren, to call a church meeting for the specified purpose of conferring upon the subject of his dismissal from this church. This move resulted in the dissolution of the pastoral relation, which took place, with the sanction of an ecclesiastical council, June 22, 1825. Mr. Cotton received of the parish, on his dismissal, in addition to his salary, the sum of \$400. For this he gave his receipt, dated the day of

his dismissal. He was the minister of this church and people twenty-eight years and fifteen days, and in the early part of his ministry followed to their graves some of the early settlers of this town.

During his ministry, there were ninety-eight admissions to this church in full communion, four hundred and one baptisms, three hundred and sixty-five deaths, and one hundred and sixty-seven marriages, exclusive of those who were married by Justices of the Peace. After Mr. Cotton's dismissal, he continued a citizen of the town till November, 1843, when he expired in the seventy-fourth year of his age, a few months more than forty-six years after his ordination, and a few months more than eighteen years after his dismissal from this church and people. As a man, Mr. Cotton was amiable, with strong sympathies for those who were in affliction, obliging in his disposition, took pleasure in conferring favors, and never sought to give unnecessary pain and trouble to those around him.

After the dismissal of Mr. Cotton, the church remained without a pastor for about a year. The state of feeling in the church at this time, was not perfectly harmonious. The conflicting doctrines which had for several years divided the Congregational churches of New England, and especially of Massachusetts, produced among the members of this church a jealousy as to the faith of their next pastor. Some preferred a religious teacher of the liberal school, others were more in sympathy with Calvin. These conflicting elements had been the cause of the severest trials to the church during the ministry of their late pastor, and his dismissal by no means removed this cause of trial in the church. The elements of jealousy and disunion were

in their own breasts, and it was hardly within the bounds of possibility, certainly not within that of probability, that the next pastor should unite these opposing influences.

After having different candidates, the church, with perfect unanimity, voted to invite Mr. Samuel Russell to settle with them in the Gospel ministry. The parish, by a very large majority, concurred with the church in giving this call to Mr. Russell. The salary offered was \$500. This call was accepted, and for the ordaining council the parties agreed to invite the Congregational churches in Dunbarton, N. H., Berlin, Lancaster, Paxton, Leicester, Rutland, Sterling, Holden, Shrewsbury, Long Meadow, Northboro', and West Boylston. In this council were represented all the isms by which the Congregational church of New England was at that time distracted.

If union could be secured by such a council, if any candidate for the ministry in Massachusetts could satisfy all, or even a respectable majority, or if the terms of settlement could be agreed upon, then opposites can be made to unite, and discord be converted into harmony. The pastors of all the churches invited were present at the meeting of the council, with the exception of Dr. Harris of Dunbarton, N. H. As might have been predicted, the conflicting opinions of the different members of this council were soon manifest; the candidate was made the medium of controversy between them, the examination conducted with unusual warmth, and the foundation laid for serious future trouble to the pastor, to the church, the society, and the town. By this council Mr. Russell was ordained, June 21, 1826. Mr. Russell was from Bow, N. H.; graduated at Dartmouth College in 1821, and completed his theological

course at Andover in 1824. In the winter of 1827, he he was married to Miss Mary J. Howe, daughter of the late Rev. Nathaniel Howe, of Hopkinton, in this State.

His religious faith agreed, essentially, with the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly. When he entered upon the duties of pastor in this place, these were the doctrines which he taught. At the time of Mr. Russell's settlement, a division of the Congregational church in New England was inevitable; and, as divisions of this kind seldom, if ever, take place without bitterness and animosity in the two parties of the division—so, in this division, there was much that was opposed to the true spirit of Christianity. In the early part of his ministry, a change was made in the Church Covenant; Articles of Faith were adopted to which all, who united with the church in future, should assent, and to a great extent the policy of the church was changed.

The great fault in Mr. Russell's character was a want of firmness, of decision, and of boldness in maintaining the position which he had conscientiously taken. This schism in the church, together with this defect in his character, was the cause of the fiery ordeal which he was called to pass through in this place. This town, like many others in eastern Massachusetts at that day, was deeply agitated in this religious controversy. Strong feelings were aroused in almost every breast, bitter animosities produced, severe invectives poured forth, and complaints of abuse and injustice uttered by both of the contending parties. Crimination and re-crimination were made with great frequency and severity, and, as is always the case, without any approach to harmony. "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stirreth up anger." During the whole

period of Mr. Russell's ministry this same controversy in the Congregational Churches of eastern Massachusetts was going on; churches were dividing, societies breaking up, clergymen defining their position, and, according to their sympathies, attaching themselves to one or the other of the conflicting parties of the denomination, fragments of churches seceding and organizing anew, and from these discordant and contending elements, two distinct and separate denominations were forming. But few towns felt more sensibly the disastrous effects of this state of the church than Boylston, and but few ministers were more severely tried by it than Mr. Russell. But this is the gloomy view of his ministry—the view which none can take without pain, and which is doubly painful to those who were the most intimately connected with it.

The bright view of the ministry of Mr. Russell, and to which we turn with pleasure, was the fact that it was at a period of powerful and extensive revivals of religion. Since the days of Edwards and Whitfield, the churches of this country have not seen and enjoyed such seasons of refreshing from the Lord, as they were blessed with between the years 1826 and 1832. A cloud of mercy, at that time, gathered and extended itself over the whole country, and poured its showers of salvation upon almost every church in the land. In this general and copious effusion of the Holy Spirit, this community shared liberally. Many were pricked to the heart, and made to enquire, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Many were those who rejoiced in believing, and during his short ministry one hundred and four were added to this church, ninety-nine by profession and five by letter. Twenty-seven of those who made profession, received baptism, leaving

seventy-two who were baptized in infancy—a striking indication of the blessing of God upon infant baptism. The parents who united with the church under Mr. Russell, brought with them to the baptismal altar sixty-six children—twenty-six other children of former members of the church were baptized. His records also show sixty-three deaths in town and twenty-five marriages, during the period of his ministry.

The thirteenth day of February, 1832, a communication was presented to the parish from Mr. Russell, requesting that his ministerial relation to this people might be dissolved. This request was granted by the parish, and the next day, Feb. 14th, concurred in by the church. The council which was invited to sanction the action of the parish and church, assembled April 11, 1832, and voted that, according to his own request, his relation to this people should cease April 17, 1832. Accordingly, at that time he relinquished his parochial charge in this place, after a ministry of five years, nine months, and twenty-six days.

Of the character of Mr. Russell, Dr. Todd, of Pittsfield, remarks: “In his manners and appearance he was simple, unaffected and kind. I have seen him in situations peculiarly trying, and yet I never heard him make a severe or an unkind remark about any man. His judgment was clear, sound, and discriminating. As a husband, a friend, a pastor and a brother in the ministry, he was respected and beloved. His humility was such that he never performed those duties, to which most ministers soon become professionally hardened, without trembling. As a preacher, he was plain in manner and plain in matter, but he was uniformly judicious and practical. His talents in the pulpit were

not those which astonish and dazzle, but his messages of life were never from an indifferent heart."

The next September after leaving this town, he was installed at Norwich, in this State, where he labored about two years, when he sunk into a consumption and died Jan. 1835, with the triumphant support of the Gospel which he had preached.*

* On account of the historical character of these discourses, and the intimate connection of the subject, it was thought best to publish them in two Sermons, instead of four, as they were originally delivered.

S E R M O N I I .

ACTS II. 4.*

BUT PETER REHEARSED THE MATTER FROM THE BEGINNING, AND EX-
POUNDED IT BY ORDER UNTO THEM.

THERE are many of the present residents of this place who remember the condition of the Congregational churches in Eastern Massachusetts, during the ministry of Mr. Russell, in this town, from the year 1826 to 1832. The division, which is now complete, was then taking place. Churches, or fragments of churches, were seceding, leaving their former places of devotion, organizing anew, erecting new houses of worship, settling pastors whose theological views were more in harmony with their own and making the sacrifices which were inseparable from these changes.

An attending consequence upon this division was bitter animosity in the two parties. Both conscious of wrong feeling and wrong doing, and yet equally inclined to self-justification, and to cast blame upon their opponents. Almost every town and every Congregational church experienced these evils; some slightly, others with great severity. This town, in common with others, was afflicted by this division in the church. The most malignant passions of our depraved natures

* For obvious reasons the texts are prefixed to these discourses for the purpose of giving them the form of Sermons.

raged. Hard speeches were made, reproach, accusations and criminations were uttered and reiterated. Friends became enemies, jealousies kindled in neighborhoods, and contention and strife existed in every section of the town. No heart was indifferent; every man, woman and child was strongly in sympathy with one or the other of the conflicting parties, and all were prepared to employ influences which tended to secure the peculiar ends which they desired. All of this was in connexion with a religion that is peace and love, that breathes good will towards men, is not easily provoked, seeketh not her own, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, a religion which requires man to love his enemies, to bless them that curse him, to do good to them that hate him, and pray for them which despitefully use him and persecute him.

Such appears to have been the state of feeling when Mr. Russell left, and such was the condition of society when I first came into the town, July 6th, 1832. I was at that time a stranger to every citizen of the town of Boylston, and was also entirely ignorant of the severe trial that this town was passing through. The first man I met was the venerable Col. Bush, and I soon learnt, though not from his family, the difficulties of the field where God, in his providence, had placed me. The following Sabbath, July 8, I supplied the pulpit, and for the first time appeared before this people, in public, as a minister of Christ. It was the second Sabbath that I had ever stood in the sacred desk. The length of my stay here was, of course, a matter of great uncertainty both to myself and to them. I continued to supply the pulpit till the fifth of August.

On the ninth of August, the church, without a dissenting vote, invited me to become their pastor. Of the thirty-four persons who were present at that church meeting, only fourteen remain regular worshipers at this house. The remaining twenty are either in their graves, out of town, too infirm to attend at the house of God, or for some other reason, are not with us. The parish concurred with the church offering an annual salary of \$500. I had just left a salary of \$1000 per annum, promptly paid in quarterly instalments, where I was urged to remain and where all was peace and harmony; but left it because I felt it to be my duty to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This call I took under serious and prayerful consideration. There certainly could have been but little that was inviting. A salary that I felt would not give me a full support; a town torn in fragments by dissension; a meeting-house by far too spacious for the small congregation of worshipers, inconvenient and uninviting in its construction, and yet an object of bitter controversy, and with no prospect, that I could see, of a favorable change. The only redeeming consideration was the hope and the probability of having a kind and an affectionate people. In this hope, it gives great pleasure to say, I was not disappointed. The insufficient salary, I felt that I could, in some way, make up. The warring elements, which were raging through the town, and which seemed to threaten the peace of any man who should occupy so prominent a place as the pastor of the church, I was sure would yield to the influence of time, even if all other influences failed; and the meeting-house could be endured, at least for a season.

Influenced by these considerations, I accepted the invitation, was ordained the 17th of Oct., 1832, twen-

ty years ago last Sabbath.* I resolved, in the beginning, to take no part in the controversy which was going on in the town. My religious sympathies were, of course, decidedly with the church over which I was installed. My religious principles I never could sacrifice nor compromise. But maintaining these principles, it was my heart's desire and prayer to God that peace and harmony might be restored to the town. I never felt for a moment that all the blame was on one side, but that both parties were in the fault, and would be likely some day to see the error of their ways, and if they were not inclined to make any concession, would at least desist from those acts of provocation, which tended to perpetuate the difficulties. I had no party triumphs to achieve, no wrongs, either real or imaginary, to redress. I could approach every man in town as one who had had no part nor lot in the matter.

Such were the circumstances and such the feelings and resolutions with which I took up my residence with you twenty years ago. I had always been taught to regard every man my friend, i. e., not hostile to me, till he proved himself to be my enemy, and then to allow him to carry on his warfare either in words or deeds, either secretly or openly, without retaliation or resentment on my part. That is, to let him contend

* Since the organization of this church (Oct. 6th, 1743,) it has been one hundred and nine years the 6th of this month (October, 1852.) During this period, the church has had the benefit of a settled pastor a few days more than one hundred and three years and eight months, and has been without a pastor a few days less than five years and four months. In only two instances has it been without a pastor more than a year at the same time. Once after the dismissal of Mr. Morse, one year four months and seventeen days; and again after the death of Mr. Hooper one year, six months, and five days. The longest ministry was that of Mr. Morse, thirty-two years and fifteen days; the shortest that of Mr. Hooper, one year, eight months and twenty days.

without an opponent. These principles were inculcated into my heart in early childhood by a faithful, christian mother, and may God grant that I may never forget nor disregard them.

I very soon became acquainted with the people of my own charge; found them kind and affectionate, easily influenced, and really desirous of doing what they could to restore peace and harmony to the town. I also, in the early part of my ministry, became acquainted with many of those who did not sympathize with me in my religious views, nor attend upon my ministry, and I am happy to say, for I feel that it is due both to the dead and to the living, that I was uniformly received by them with kindness. In my calls and visits at their houses, I was made to feel that I was welcome. My whole influence, both with my own people and with their opponents, was for peace; to banish, if possible, from the town those petty jealousies—those painful contentions, and those bitter animosities, which so marred the moral beauty of this place, and which caused so much pain without accomplishing any good. I knew that time would be necessary to heal the deep wounds which had been inflicted in the sharp conflict that had been going on; that men would not forget, in a day nor in a year, the abuse, either real or imaginary, which they had received of their fellow-men—yet, if all could be induced to adopt a more pacific course, to labor to sooth and not to irritate, and to dismiss their suspicions and jealousies, I was assured that ultimately a desirable change, in the condition of society, would be accomplished. With such views and hopes, one important end of my labors was to move those influences which would secure these desirable results. Whether the influence which I exerted, contributed to

accomplish the end which I desired, is now of small consequence. I rejoice that the end is so far secured; that so much peace and harmony exist in this town. For where will you find a town in which there is, at this time, more good feeling among the inhabitants? There are now, as there were formerly, diverse views, both on religious and political subjects, yet there is no contention—I think no unkind and hostile party feelings. Each claims for himself, and is willing to grant to others, perfect toleration. There is more confidence among those who differ in their views, and more disposition to unite their efforts for improving the condition of the town, and consequently there is more prosperity, more intellectual, moral and physical improvement.

During the last twenty years, there have been at different times, in this town, different religious societies. In reference to these societies a pacific course has been uniformly adopted by the church and society worshipping in this house. They cannot, with justice and truth, be charged with any attempt to embarrass these societies in their movements, or with exerting any influence, directly and intentionally, against their prosperity and success.

When I became the pastor of this church there were one hundred and forty-eight members—sixty males and eighty-eight females. Of these one hundred and forty-eight, only sixty-two continue their relation to this church; eighty-six have either been called to their account, or in some other way have been separated from us. And of the sixty-two who still sustain a relation to us, only thirty-seven are resident active members, that is, regular and constant worshipers in this house.

What an admonition do these facts give to us who

in the enjoyment of life and health ! How brief the period of twenty years, and yet what changes has this brief period produced ! How many houses have been visited with death—how many families clad in mourning. Look back to the beginning of this brief period, and see who were then pursuing with you the journey of life ; follow, in your thoughts, the course of time, and again see who has fallen by the way. Every relation in life has been broken up ; and the heart of the husband and the wife, the parent and the child, and the brother and the sister, has been made to bleed in the keenest anguish.

The Sabbath School Library was then kept in a chest ; it consisted of about one hundred and forty volumes, many of them badly worn, and actually, when the torn and soiled books were excepted, not containing as many volumes as there were pupils in the school ; each scholar could not have had a volume at the same time. The book-case which we now have is a great advance upon the chest, but we now need a larger case to contain, when conveniently arranged, our present library. I trust that this necessity will be provided for in due time.

The next favorable change that was made by the church, was the purchase of a new service for the Communion table. The service which was in use in this church at the time of my ordination, was inconvenient, ordinary, antique, and insufficient. It had been in use many years, probably was about as old as the church, and was valuable mainly as a relic of former days, as one of the few things that had been transmitted from the early fathers of the church. The service which we now have in use was purchased by subscription, and

the names of the more liberal subscribers are engraved on several of the articles which compose the service. The cost of it was a trifle less than eighty-five dollars.

The church and the society felt deeply sensible of the evils connected with their house of worship. It was owned in part by persons who did not sympathize nor worship with them, who declined occupying their pews, and were thus deprived of the use of the property which they had vested in the house. The house itself was therefore a cause of division in the town, and tended to perpetuate the contentions which existed in this place. Again, the house would soon need extensive repairs, was too large for the congregation that worshipped in it, was uncomfortable and cheerless, afforded no convenient place for weekly meetings, was destitute of all the modern improvements which were found in other houses of worship in the vicinity, and destructive, on account of its construction and spaciousness, to ministerial life. That this source of division might be removed, and that the church and society might have a house suited to their wants, they determined, in the spring of 1835, to build a new house on a new spot which they purchased for that purpose. A contract was made, and early in the spring they began to prepare the ground, and the building of this beautiful and convenient house was begun. From beginning to end there was remarkable harmony in all the movements of the parish in reference to this undertaking. The spot upon which to build, the plan of the house, and the style of finish, were all easily agreed upon, and the house went up with great ease and despatch, because there were unity and energy among those who were engaged in the work. The house was finished and furnished, with all its appurtenances, by

the 10th of December, 1835, when it was solemnly dedicated to Almighty God.

So harmonious were the society in this movement, that only eight parish meetings were held for the purpose of transacting all the business connected with the building of the house, from the beginning till the final settlement. When the first house of worship was built in this town, the early settlers of the precinct, though harmonious, held not less than fourteen precinct meetings for commencing and completing the house. The building of the next house, which was first brought before the town in 1791, was the occasion of about twenty town meetings by adjournment or otherwise, and also the occasion of a division in the parish and the church, and finally of a division in town. But the erection of this house, instead of causing a division in the town or parish, was rather directly or indirectly the means of union and harmony. The old house was removed, when this was finished, because it was no longer needed, and thus one fruitful source of controversy in the town was taken away. The parish, relinquishing all their right in the house to the pew owners, left the whole thing in the most favorable condition for an amicable arrangement. The house was finally sold, and the amount for which it was sold apportioned among the owners of the pews, in a manner, I believe, satisfactory to all. This being done, the town and the opposing parties of the town had an opportunity to reflect upon the past, and resolve in reference to the future. Reflection could not fail of impressing upon their minds that no good resulted from contention, but that it was the source of pain and regret to all who were engaged in it. It affords no enjoyment to the contending parties at the time, neither does it afford

any when they review it in after life, or from the bed of death; while resolutions for peace and harmony cannot fail of affording that peace of mind and conscience which is above all price.

During these 20 years, God has not left this church without manifest tokens of his favor. We have frequently heard the enquirer asking what he should do to be saved—we have also heard the young convert rejoicing in believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, and in hoping for eternal life through faith in his name. One hundred and thirty-five have been added to this church in this period; forty-seven males and eighty-eight females—one hundred and ten by profession, and twenty-five by letter. Of these, eleven have already gone into the eternal world to test the reality of their Christian faith. Some of them gave very satisfactory evidence that they died in the Lord—that for them to die was gain, and to depart was to depart to be with Christ. They left behind them to their Christian friends a rich source of consolation in the evidence which they gave that they were the true followers of the Saviour. When we think of these accessions to this branch of Zion, let us rejoice and give thanks to God for such manifestations of his grace in having brought so many to renounce their sins and professedly to put on Christ. And again, when we think of them, let us humble ourselves before God, in view of our unfaithfulness—our neglect of the appointed means of salvation, and by our neglect allowing so many, whom we might instrumentally have saved, to go on in the way of death. Give God the glory for all that has been done for the salvation of souls in this place, and for the building up of this church, and take to ourselves shame and confusion of face that no more has been done.

I have also, since my ordination in this place, officiated at ninety-one weddings. The bond of union then formed was as strong as life, nothing but death could innocently break it asunder, but death, which levels all earthly distinctions, and breaks all earthly ties, has also been busy in destroying these matrimonial bonds. No less than twelve of those whom I so recently declared to be husband and wife, are now in their graves; their companions have watched over them in their last sickness and their dying conflict, and followed them to the house appointed for all the living. Some of these couples have become parents, but have hardly looked upon the pledges of their mutual love, when God, in his righteous but mysterious providence, has smitten the dear objects of their fondest hopes, and left them to feel the anguish of parental bereavement. Some have repeatedly been called to drop the tear of parental affection upon the graves of their children. But, my friends, this is only the beginning of sorrow. The same grim messenger, who has so early begun his work, will never be satisfied till the last of these matrimonial bands is broken, till the last husband has wept at the grave of his wife, or the last wife has wept at the grave of her husband. Of these ninety-one couples, nineteen are regular worshipers in this house; the tie which unites them is still unbroken; but remember, my dear friends, the frailty and brevity of that bond and make it the object of your future life to be prepared for its dissolution, and for a place in that world where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

We have just looked at the additions to this church, let us now look at the removals. During the last twenty years, one hundred and forty-nine members have

been separated from this branch of Zion, fifty-one by death and ninety-eight by vote of the church. We dismiss about four times as many as we receive by letter. It would require, therefore, an unusual state of spiritual prosperity to keep our numbers good. Had we received four times as many as we have dismissed, instead of the reverse, our present number would have exceeded five hundred, and we should have been the largest church in the State except four.

The number of baptisms administered in this church during this period is one hundred and forty-five, twenty-four adults and one hundred and twenty-one infants. More than three-fourths of those who have made a profession of their faith in Christ during the last twenty years, received baptism in infancy—thus manifesting the approbation of God upon this institution, and rebuking those who deny to their offspring this seal of the covenant.

The number of deaths in this town since October 17, 1832, is two hundred and fifty, averaging twelve and a half per year, which is less than one and a half per cent. per annum of our population, and less than twenty-eight per cent. of our population for the entire twenty years. This fact indicates an unusual degree of health, and should call forth from our hearts the most lively gratitude to God for this distinguishing mercy. But though the amount of health has been great, and that of sickness and death comparatively small, yet it has been sufficient to warn us of our own mortality, of the mortality of our friends, of our liability to affliction, and of our need of being prepared to meet our God.

These two hundred and fifty deaths have clad this town in sackcloth; almost, if not quite, every house in its turn, has been made a house of mourning. Every

heart has been made to bleed, every eye to weep. Could these two hundred and fifty persons now be summoned to stand before us, we should see among them some who were the most valuable citizens of this town; parents would see among them their children, and children their parents; husbands would see their wives and wives their husbands; brothers and sisters would see each other; friend would see friend, and relative, relative. But, my friends, they will not return to us, but we shall go to them. The next twenty years will remove other hundreds, and this work of death will continue till the last person who now occupies a seat in this house shall have gone, till the places which now know us shall know us no more, till those who are now unborn, shall be the members of this church, and shall contemplate our history as we contemplate the history of those who lived and died before we were born. When we look at this flight of time, and the work of death which it has accomplished, we may well remark, "What is your life? it is even a vapor which appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." When we read history, generations pass away like dreams, the children follow the fathers in such rapid succession that we hardly have time to look at them before they are gone, and others are in their places passing away with the same rapidity.

During the last twenty years I have also been intimately acquainted with the state of our Schools, and though the history of common schools is not a history of the church, nor necessarily connected with it, yet, ministerial life in this Commonwealth is so intimately associated with the education of the young, that it is not out of place to allude to this subject at this time. Next to my interest in the cause of Christ, and the ad-

vancement of piety in the church, has been my interest in the education of your children. My connection with the schools has brought under my supervision all the youth of this place for the last twenty years. Those whom I never saw at the house of God, I have met in the school-room, and those whom I was not allowed to instruct in the peculiarities of my own faith, I could exhort to repentance and to a faithful improvement of their advantages for education; I could tell them of the brevity and uncertainty of life, of the swiftness with which youth passes away, of the benefits of right principles and right practices in after life, and especially of the indispensable necessity of a good English education, if they would occupy, in life, places of usefulness, respectability and trust. I have made, during the period of my residence with you, more than five hundred visits to your schools, where I have met your children, endeavored to give a right direction to their thoughts, suggest to your teachers whatever I thought would contribute to the good of their pupils, and as well as I knew how, I have given them a word of encouragement, to prompt them to habits of industry and virtue. Sometimes I have failed of visiting the schools as often as I desired, and have sometimes been absent at the final examination, but never without urgent necessity, and deep regret. My duties on the School Committee, though sometimes exceedingly trying and perplexing, bringing me in direct and unavoidable conflict with those who are my friends, and exposing myself to reproach and abuse, yet in many respects these duties have been among the most pleasing and interesting which have devolved upon me. May the Lord bless the children in our schools, and make the schools blessings to them and to the community.

The pastoral duties of this place are not so arduous as they are in more extensive and more populous parishes, and yet, even here, they are by no means small. None but a minister of Christ knows any thing of the amount of labor which is connected with this department of ministerial duty. I have intended to meet every family who belong to this congregation, at least, once a year, and to call upon other families in town, where I had reason to believe that a call would be acceptable, as often as my other duties would permit. This department of duty is far from being irksome, and I have always entered upon it cheerfully and with pleasure when the press of other duties would allow, and I am happy to add that you have never failed to do your part to make these calls pleasant to me; I have felt at home when I have been with you at your own fire-sides. In my visits to the sick I have generally confined myself to those who worshiped in this house, though I have always been happy to visit others in their sickness when desired, or when I had sufficient evidence that it would be acceptable. The instruction of the apostle on this point is this: "Is any sick among you? let him CALL for the elders of the church." This text makes it the duty of the sick, or of the families to which they belong, to request the attendance of the pastor. Were this duty observed, the pastor would always be informed on the subject, and many instances of apparent neglect, in which he is ignorant of the sickness of his people, would be avoided. The visits and calls, which I have made since my settlement with you, may be recorded by thousands.

During the twenty years which I am now reviewing,

I have supplied this pulpit, either in person, by exchange or otherwise, one thousand and twenty-eight Sabbaths, and have left it vacant, or to be supplied by the Parish Committee, fifteen Sabbaths. It was a condition in my settlement, understood and assented to by the committee who were chosen by the Parish to negotiate with me before my ordination, that I should be entitled to two Sabbaths each year, which would give me forty Sabbaths in twenty years. My practice has been never to leave you without a supply, without the most urgent necessity. I have preached to this people, either in person, or by supplies procured by exchange or otherwise, two thousand and ninety-four sermons. On the fifteen Sabbaths which I have left the pulpit vacant, you have been supplied, either gratuitously or otherwise without any expense to me, four Sabbaths; and the pulpit has been without any supply eleven Sabbaths. On two of these fifteen Sabbaths, I have been prevented from supplying the pulpit by sickness, and have been abroad, visiting my friends or otherwise detained out of town, thirteen Sabbaths.

In my preaching, I have not shunned to declare unto you what I regarded the whole counsel of God, and have kept back nothing which I thought would be profitable unto you. Testifying repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, I have never modified the doctrines which I have advanced to suit any man's particular taste, or to make them harmonize with any man's particular views. My design has been to preach unto you Jesus Christ and him crucified—an all-sufficient Savior, able to save to the uttermost all who come to him; waiting to be gracious, not willing that any should perish, showing mercy unto thousands

who love him and keep his commandments; but who will by no means clear the guilty, and who will say to the wicked at the last day, Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

During this period, this church has been invited to sit on forty-one councils, and fourteen different brethren have been chosen as delegates to attend these councils. One of these fourteen has been chosen delegate six times—four have been chosen five times each—one has been chosen three times—five have been chosen twice each, and three have been chosen once each. Whether it be regarded a privilege or a burden, the duty of attending councils as delegates has been distributed as generally in the church as we could expect.

In conclusion, permit me to call your attention to the striking changes which, in the brief period of twenty years, have transpired around us. I have already alluded to these changes, though not as particularly as I desire. We have all advanced twenty years in life, our families have advanced with us, and society and the world have also advanced. We are twenty years nearer the grave and the eternal world, have twenty years less of probation in which to prepare for death, and have twenty years more of probation to account for at the judgment seat. If we look at our families, and the circle of our friends and relatives, what changes, both painful and joyful, do we notice; if we look at society, we cannot fail of seeing changes, and the very face of nature around us presents to us a different aspect from what it did twenty years ago. Forests have disappeared, new buildings have been

erected, old buildings have been destroyed or improved, and the very roads we travel have been changed in their location, in some parts of their course, in almost every direction, from the centre to the confines of the town. If we enter the different dwellings in town, there too is change; those who once greeted us are there no more; they have either been called to their account, or for some reason have changed their abodes, and the places which they once filled are now filled by others. Or if we find in the same dwellings the same families, still how changed are these families! They have advanced twenty years in life, are composed of different members, and are in different circumstances. Some who were then in active life, are now decrepit through age, or disabled by the power of protracted disease; youth have reached middle life; and those who were then young children have now become parents.

If you look around you, you see that death has been busy in almost every house. Of those who were then seventy, not one remains to represent the generation to which he belonged. In one house you may find the widow with her fatherless children; the husband and father is here no more; in death he bid them adieu, and commended them to the protection of the God of the widow and the fatherless. For years he had pursued the journey of life with them, for them he had labored, for them he had planned; he had counseled them, warned them, cheered them, wept with them, and prayed for and with them. He loved them, and lived only to help them on to glory. In another house, the wife and mother has been called to pass through the dark valley. The husband and father finds himself

a widower, and his children motherless. Well do they remember the sweet accents of conjugal and maternal love; but the tongue that uttered those accents, and the heart which cherished that love, have ceased to act. In sickness the wife and mother will no more smooth the pillow, administer the nauseous but necessary draught, and by day and by night watch in anxious solicitude by the bedside; she will no more wipe the tear from the eye, nor soothe the troubled and sorrowing heart. She has uttered the last words of counsel and of sympathy, and given the last expression of conjugal and maternal affection.

In another house, the vacancy which you notice, and which every member of the family feels continually, though every feeling is a pang, was occasioned by the death of a child—a beloved son or daughter. Parental affection had watched over his infancy, listened with parental fondness to the prattlings of childhood, protected and counseled him in youth—had seen him ripen into manhood with increasing love—enjoyed his society, bore his frailties, wept over his faults and his trials, and looked forward in hope to his future success and prosperity, and to the faithful and grateful return of filial love; when, in the mysterious providence of God, the messenger of death blasted all these fond hopes, changed the countenance and sent away the dear object of their fondest regard, and inflicted a wound upon the parent's heart which time can never heal. Some, who are here before me, have, in this brief period, followed both their parents to the house appointed for all the living, parents who loved them, with whom are their earliest, most tender, and most endearing associations, who wept with them when

they wept, and rejoiced with them when they rejoiced, and in whose hearts they felt sure of finding love and affection, though all other hearts should grow cold. Changes like these you find in almost every house and sorrows like these you find in almost every heart. Twenty years have passed away, and these, my friends, are the memorials which mark its progress.

But look at this congregation. Where are those venerable forms which once occupied these seats—those who blessed us with their counsels and bowed with us in prayer around this altar, twenty years ago; who viewed, with such deep interest, every thing which affected the prosperity of this church and this society, those who, with their own hands, helped us rear this house, whose names are engraved upon the different articles of your communion service, and whose hands were once with us on the table of the Lord? Where are James Longley, Benj. Houghton, Col. Bush, Gershom Eames, Thos. Bond, Oliver Sawyer, David Barnes, Aaron White, Nathaniel Brigham, Joseph Tilton, Ethan Smith, Stephen Flagg, and Dea. Flagg, together with those women who helped us in the Lord? Names with which are associated in my mind many of the most interesting incidents of my connection with this people, and with which must be associated, in your minds, even from your earliest childhood, the most important interests of this church, society and town. But they have gone, and the places which once knew them, will know them no more forever.

Another twenty years has now begun, which will soon be reckoned in the past, and he who reviews it will find many of the places occupied by those whom I now address, occupied by those who shall come after us,

while many of you, my friends, will be named as those who once filled these places, but are here no longer. May the God of all grace sanctify to each of us this review of the past, and may we be admonished by it to be prepared for those solemn scenes which are before us in the future, and for a place in those mansions where these sad and painful changes can never come.

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